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A State Profile: Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom

Michele Awad: State Coordinator, Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom

Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) reached over 600 teachers in 1998-99 school year through teacher-training programs and "Standards of Learning" academic-oriented materials, developed through a partnership with the North Carolina AITC. Their School Garden Project, introduced this year in conjunction with the Southern States Cooperative, Inc., and Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens, reached its goal of encouraging 300 teachers to start school gardens.

Other initiatives include Virginia AITC's Summer Ag Institutes and the *What's Growing On in Virginia? Newsletter*. The institutes give teachers the opportunity to see the agricultural industry first-hand. These four-day courses provide teachers

with real-life experiences, the opportunity to see how agribusiness operates, and the chance to discuss agricultural topics with farmers, merchants, processors and others in the industry.

The Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom, which funds AITC educational initiatives and programs, has been pushed to keep pace with the growth of the program. As the program looks forward to the new millennium, the goal of being recognized as a leading educational program and resource for agriculture remains firmly in focus. Next year, the program will reach more teachers, update its Web site, redesign the statewide Ag Institute credit course and hire facilitators to provide additional services to teachers. For more information on Virginia AITC contact Michele Awad, Executive Director at 804-784-1374 or mawad@vafb.com.

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Teachers Come Together to Learn Ways to Educate Youth About Agriculture

*Sharlet Teigen: 1999 National
Conference Planning Committee*

More than 250 people—mostly teachers and educators—joined forces in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma May 19-22 to learn innovative ways to incorporate agriculture into today's classrooms. The "Blazing Trails to the 21st Century" conference was co-sponsored by USDA's Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) program and Oklahoma's Ag in the Classroom.

Educators came from 36 States, American Samoa, Micronesia and Canada to take part in dynamic hands-on training sessions. For more than 100 people, this was their first AITC conference.

They learned interesting ways to educate today's non-ag youth just how integral agriculture is to their everyday lives. Conference educators learned about the growing body of research on "agricultural literacy" and its value to society. Conference highlights, including photographs, are accessible through the AITC web site at

<http://www.reeusda.gov/serd/hep/agclass.htm>

Visit our website to also find out about the next National Ag in the Classroom Conference which will be held June 14-17, 2000, in Salt Lake City, Utah. See page 6 of this newsletter for a call for proposals—your opportunity to share your projects with educators from around the nation.

New Teacher Awards Program

*Kevin Bacon: USDA, National Program Leader,
Agribusiness and Economics Education*

The Ag in the Classroom (AITC) Consortium in cooperation with the National Ag in the Classroom Program within the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) is pleased to announce a national competitive teachers award program. Three national recipients will be selected based on excellence in teaching and integrating agricultural concepts into their academic efforts. The inaugural awards will be presented at the 2000 National AITC Conference in Utah. The winners will receive conference registration and travel expenses to the annual conference and will have an opportunity to share their projects with others. Additional information will be coming.

Dear Friends of Ag in the Classroom:

Even though it has been pretty hot these days, summer agriculture institutes, teacher training workshops, credit courses and other sessions have been a part of Ag in the Classroom's summer. We also anticipate the arrival of a new academic year and new students right around the corner.

In this edition of the Notes Newsletter you will find new resource materials, a ready-to-use popular activity, "Dirt-Baby," and interesting facts from the 1997 Census of Agriculture. Remember to look for highlights of the 1999 National Ag in the Classroom Conference. Pictures are posted on the website, too.

Check out the information about the upcoming 2000 national conference. For the first time, we are seeking proposals for you to share information at the conference. We want to hear from you! Even if you do not send in a proposal, drop us a line and tell us about your activities. We applaud your efforts to keep Agriculture in the Classroom.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Jackson
National Program Leader
Ag in the Classroom

Educational Resources

Crazy About Corn

Adopted from New Mexico State University

Discipline: Math, Science and Language Arts

Concepts: Cognition, memory, counting, alphabetizing

Agricultural Focus: Corn

Grade Levels: K-3

Crazy About Corn is a lively, fun-filled educational package with a CD-ROM, teacher's resource guide, video tape, and songbook. Enchanting characters like Cornelia, the Corn Monster, Super-Corn, and the Corn Stalks sing original songs and lead games which help children improve pattern recognition and elementary scientific concepts. The activity book and teacher guide include puzzles, games, and creative and fun activities. This educational package was developed by educators and is appropriate for grades K-3.

Cooperative Extension Service Electronic Media Unit of New Mexico State University developed the unit and received the Golden ARC Award in 1998. *Crazy About Corn* is available from the university by writing: NMSU Agricultural Communications, Box 30003 MSC 3AI, Las Cruces, NM 88003-8003, or calling toll-free 1-888-750-4156. Visit their website at <http://www.leadingobject.com/>



Dirt Baby

Adopted from Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom's "Oklahoma Gardens"

Discipline: Science and Art Activity

Concepts: Capillary action, adsorption of water, germination of seed

Agricultural Focus: Soil, grass seed, water

Grade Levels: K-6

1. To create a dirt-baby, begin with knee-high stockings. (Support stockings will not work.)
2. Place a handful of grass seed in the toe of the stocking. This will become the top of the dirt-baby and where the "hair" will grow.
3. Pack a handful of soil on top of the seed.
4. Tie a knot in the stocking under the ball of soil.
5. Place this ball resting on top of a tall jar filled with water. Put the rest of the stocking in the jar.
6. The stocking will absorb the water and saturate the head of the dirt-baby above the mouth of the jar. In 10-15 days the seed will germinate. (You may have to cut a few small holes to aid in this step.) Rather than water the seeds directly, capillary action pulls the water up into the soil through soaking the stocking.
7. Decorate the dirt-baby by cutting a round piece of fabric to fit over the mouth of the jar.
8. Glue juggle eyes and a heart-shaped piece of felt for the mouth to create a face on the ball of soil.
9. Add water to the jar as needed.
10. Cut the "hair" and style as desired.

Agriculture Through the Eye of the Census

Janet Allen: National Agricultural Statistics Services

Results of the 1997 Census of Agriculture provide keen insight into the changing face of America's food and fiber production and identify trends at the State, county, and national level.

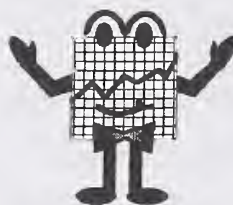
Key findings from the census include:

- Ninety percent of America's farms and ranches are individual or family-owned businesses or family-held corporations. Nine percent are partnerships, and one percent are corporations or other forms of business.
- Major crop commodities like corn, soybeans and wheat showed no great fluctuations in their share of agricultural sales from 1992 to 1997. Livestock sales changed in some categories. While poultry sales rose 5 percent and hog and pig sales rose 3 percent, cattle sales declined 7 percent.
- Farmland use was virtually unchanged from 1992 to 1997, with 46 percent used as cropland and 43 percent kept as pasture or rangeland. The remainder was used for buildings, roads and other materials.
- The continued rise in the average age of America's farmers over the past two decades has sparked questions over who will be our next generation of farmers. However, 25 percent of the nearly 157,000 new farms operators were under 35-years-old.
- More farms are being operated by women, Hispanics, and Native Americans. In fact, the 1997 Census of Agriculture represented the first effort to account for individual Native American operators on reservations.

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) provides data from the census and hundreds of surveys for free on the Internet. Simply visit www.usda.gov/nass to view tables and reports, download data files, print press releases,

etc. Be sure to explore the NASS Kids Page during your cyber-visit. On the NASS Kids Page,

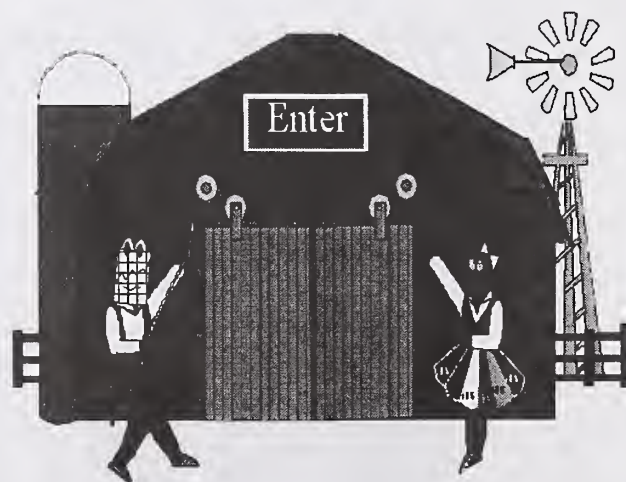
Stanley Stat and Pie Chart Pam will explain—in "kid-speak"—what statistics are, what statisticians do, and how statistical data are displayed in charts. The Kids Page also features games, jokes, on-line



coloring books, links to State Statistical Offices for a local flavor of agriculture facts, and other cool links.

New lessons, based on the 1997 census and similar to those prepared with the 1992 data, are in the planning stage and are expected by the beginning of next year. To receive a copy of the 1992 lesson plans, or to provide comments and suggestions for new lessons please contact Janet Allen at (301) 763-5004 or e-mail jlallen@nass.usda.gov.

For more information about NASS data e-mail nass@nass.usda.gov or call the Agriculture Statistics Hotline at 1-800-727-9540.



Impressions

Debra Spielmaker: President AITC National Consortium

WOW! I just finished reading the 1998-99 State Reports and am truly impressed with all of the efforts and accomplishments made nationwide. Because our state organizations differ in setup, staff, and funding most of us have found creative ways to reach the teachers and youth. It's great to read about your successes. Our combined efforts reached more than 120,000 teachers impacting more than 5 million students in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Territories. The continued growth of your state programs strengthens our Consortium.

Your activities to increase agricultural literacy among our youth are evidence of your commitment and passion for our agriculture literacy mission. I hope you will share your zeal for agricultural literacy in these formative years of our Consortium. Communication is the key to our Consortium's success. If you have ideas, comments, or just want to share some thoughts, please contact a Consortium Executive Committee member. A list of the Consortium Executive Committee appears in this newsletter.

Currently the Consortium Executive Committee is reviewing a Memorandum of Understanding with the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service's Agriculture in the Classroom Program. This agreement would formalize our relationship with USDA-AITC and help us in accomplishing

some of our purposes including the continuity of the Agriculture in the Classroom Program. We hope that by working with the USDA we can help develop national priorities that will benefit your state programs.

When I attended my first conference in Washington, D.C. in 1995, I was impressed by the camaraderie and sharing among the state contacts and programs. I continue to be impressed when I review your accomplishments in teacher training, publications, field days, other special events, and your initiatives to increase agricultural literacy. Our Consortium now recognizes your accomplishments through the "Agricultural Initiative Award," I encourage you to submit an application this year and share your endeavors with our membership. Wow, I can't wait to read next year's reports!

If you didn't get a copy of the State Reports for 1998-99, they are available from USDA's AITC and will be on the new USDA-AITC website (www.agclassroom.com) in October. These are definitely worth reading!

National Agriculture in the Classroom Consortium

Executive Committee

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2000 National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference Presentation Proposals

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

E-mail: _____

Title of Session:

Description of Presentation — 100 words or less

Please attach a description of your session to this form. Your description will be used for review purposes and will be edited for inclusion in the conference program. The conference planning committee, chosen by USDA Ag in the Classroom and the National Consortium Executive Committee, will determine which proposals are accepted for the upcoming 2000 National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference.

Session Format Options:

Check the box that best describes the session format most appropriate for your proposal.

— Workshops (1.5 or 2 hours)

Sessions that develop specific professional skills or competencies and stress active involvement of workshop participants.

— Mini-Workshops (3 twenty-minute sessions)

Small group or one-on-one activities or discussions on programs, projects, curricula, or special topics. Discussions are informal.

— Make and Take (Short, continuous sessions)

Small group or one-on-one sessions where a quality item is made and participants can take a new item and its instructions with them. Sessions are informal.

Intended Audience Type

Check all of the boxes that describe the audiences that your presentation would best reach.

- ☐ AITC State Contact
- ☐ Educator
- ☐ AITC Board Member
- ☐ Principal/Administrator
- ☐ University or College
- ☐ Education Board Member

- ☐ Volunteer
- ☐ Federal/State Gov.
- ☐ Commodity or Ag Group --
Please specify:
- ☐ Other -- Please specify:

Send or fax to: Dorothy Jackson by **August 30, 1999** at the following address:

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AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

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